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**Nursing**

**NURSING OPERATIONS**

**COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY**

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This instruction implements Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 46-1, *Nursing Services*. It sets responsibilities and directs nursing services operations in a medical treatment facility (MTF). It describes the mission objective of nursing services and the characteristics of an effective nursing organization within the MTF. Use this instruction along with the Air Force Instruction (AFI) 41-117, *Educational Programs for Medical Service Officers*, AFI 46-102, *Nursing Care*, AFI 36-2201, *Developing, Managing, and Conducting Military Training Programs*, the most current edition of the *Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) Accreditation Manual for Hospitals*, *JCAHO Accreditation Manual for Ambulatory Health Care*, *JCAHO Accreditation Manual for Mental Health*, *Chemical Dependency and Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities Services*, and other published JCAHO standards as appropriate, the published standards of the *American Nurses Association* for nursing services, practice, and care, and published standards of other national professional nursing organizations as appropriate. The instruction applies to all Air Force medical units, Air Reserve components and Air National Guard components where nursing care activities are performed. Send comments and suggested improvements on AF Form 847, **Recommendation for Change of Publication**, through channels to HQ USAF/SGN, 170 Luke Avenue, Suite 400, Bolling AFB DC 20332-5113.

**SUMMARY OF REVISIONS**

This is the initial publication of AFI 46-101; it prescribes nursing management as being responsible for nursing care wherever it occurs within an MTF.

**Section A—Objectives, Structures, and Scope of Nursing Services**

**1. Nursing Services:**

- Plans for and provides safe, effective nursing care for beneficiaries in hospitals, communities, clinics, theaters of operation, and the aerospace environment.

- Provides education for beneficiaries that promotes healthy lifestyles.

**2. Organizational Structure:** Nursing services' organization complements the MTF's organization to facilitate communication and mission effectiveness. The authority, relationships, and flow of communication within nursing services and between other MTF services/departments are determined locally. Show the authority, relationships, and flow of communication on an organizational chart.

**3. MTF Plan for Providing Patient Care:** This MTF plan describes the scope of patient care services provided by the MTF in response to identified patient care needs and is consistent with the MTF's mission. The plan also describes how patient care services are appropriately integrated throughout the MTF. The plan specifies the organizational and functional relationships of the various MTF services and departments.

3.1. The Nurse Executive (NE) collaborates with the other members of the MTF executive team to plan for nursing care as part of the patient care services. The plan describes:

- The definition of nursing care.
- All areas where nursing care is provided.
- Mechanisms used in each area to identify patient care needs.
- The number and mix of staff members in each area needed to provide for patients' needs.
- The process for managing staffing variances from the identified staffing needs.
- The plan for improving quality of care in each area.

3.2. The MTF executive team approves the plan.

3.3. The MTF executive team reviews and revises the plan for appropriateness annually as part of the budget review. The review includes at least:

- Changes in patient populations and programs.
- Patient requirements and staffing implications.
- Staffing variance reports.
- The MTF's ability to recruit and develop appropriate staff.
- Information relating to staffing from quality improvement, risk management and
- utilization review programs.

## ***Section B—Responsibilities***

### **4. Managing Nursing Services:**

**4.1. NE.** A senior Nurse Corps officer who has primary responsibility, authority, and accountability for oversight of nursing activities as defined in the MTF's Plan for Providing Patient Care.

4.1.1. The NE is a member of the MTF executive team and collaborates with members in executive-level policy and decision making.

4.1.2. The NE participates in MTF committees and meetings, including:

- MTF strategic planning processes.

- MTF planning for patient care.
- Resource management (personnel, materiel, and budgets).
- Policy and instructions review.
- Forums for quality improvement.

4.1.3. The NE ensures the MTF Plan for Providing Patient Care supports improvement and innovation in nursing practice in a managed care environment and is based on:

- The needs of the patients.
- Consumer input.
- Current national, specialty, and local standards of nursing care and practice.
- The MTF's capabilities and mission.

4.1.4. The NE directs the development of programs, policies, and procedures for the MTF that describe how to assess, meet, evaluate, document, and improve the nursing care needs of patients or patient populations.

4.1.5. The NE ensures that all members of the nursing staff are competent to perform their assigned responsibilities.

4.1.5.1. The NE works with squadron management teams to select and assign nursing services personnel to provide nursing care. Nursing services personnel are accountable to the NE (or designated Nurse Corps officer or civilian nurse equivalent) for nursing practice in their assigned areas.

4.1.6. The NE provides for and promotes professional development of all nursing service personnel through:

- Orientation.
- In-service education and training.
- Competency evaluation.
- Continuing education (see AFI 41-117, *Educational Programs for Medical Service Officers*).
- Career development counseling.
- Mentoring.

4.1.7. The NE coordinates and applies nursing research activities, protocols, or findings within the MTF.

4.1.8. The NE communicates with community groups, civilian professional nursing organizations, and educational agencies.

**4.2. Nurse Manager.** An experienced Nurse Corps officer or civilian nurse equivalent who manages nursing personnel providing medical support and nursing care in any area defined as providing nursing care for patients. Nurse managers may be identified at any organizational level and may serve on clinical management teams.

**4.3. Shift Charge Nurse.** In the absence of the nurse manager, a designated nurse on duty who is responsible for the provision of nursing care during the shift.

**4.4. Clinical Nurse.** A licensed professional nurse who provides nursing care in all settings where nursing care occurs and is accountable to the nurse manager.

**4.5. Medical Technician.** Trained paraprofessional who assists in providing patient care under the direct supervision of a nurse or privileged provider.

### *Section C—Competency Evaluation*

**5. Definition of Competency Evaluation:** Competency evaluation is the process of determining the fitness of personnel to perform assigned responsibilities. It includes educational preparation, licensure and certification as appropriate, skill assessment, and achievement of core competencies related to assigned nursing care responsibilities.

### **6. Skills Assessment of Nurse Corps Officers:**

6.1. Use AF Form 2680 series (see paragraph 10. , Forms Prescribed, for a list of the forms) to document skills assessment on each Nurse Corps member:

- Upon arrival at initial assignment and follow-on assignments.
- When the member is assigned to a different care delivery setting.
- When the supervisor identifies the need.
- At least every three years.

6.2. Keep applicable completed forms readily accessible to the individual nurse's work area. All nurses should complete and keep updated the basic skills assessment, AF Form 2681, **Personnel Data Guide and Skills Assessment Checklist** and complete additional skills assessment forms as appropriate.

6.3. If an individual is fully qualified in the Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) 46PX (Mental Health Nurse), 46SX (Operating Room Nurse), or 46MX (Nurse Anesthetist), then you need only complete the applicable skills assessment form for that specialty and do not need to maintain AF Form 2681.

6.4. All nurses in management positions, regardless of AFSC, should complete AF Form 2682, **Personnel Data Guide and Skills Assessment-Nurse Manager**.

**7. Skills Assessment of Medical Technicians:** See Air Force Instruction 36-2201, *Developing, Managing, and Conducting Military Training Programs*, to use the Specialty Training Standard (STS) and to plan, conduct, evaluate, and document enlisted training.

**8. Core Competencies:** Core competencies may be developed which describe the standard of practice for specialty nursing tasks. Use core competencies to evaluate the achievement of specific skills for both nurses and medical technicians. Select only those core competencies which are appropriate for the assigned nursing care responsibilities. Develop local policies for use.

**9. Performing Tasks Beyond Those Authorized by License:** Under the concept of Federal Supremacy, the Air Force may, for the purposes of its mission, utilize nurses for tasks that may be beyond those authorized by the state that issued the individual's license. Similarly, medical technicians may be asked to perform tasks beyond their normal training.

9.1. Such utilization of licensed practitioners must meet three criteria:

- The task or procedure must be mission-required.
- The practitioner must be trained for these additional duties.
- The task or procedure must be within the reasonable scope of the practitioner's education, training and ability.

9.2. When the MTF decides that a medical technician needs to perform tasks not outlined in the STS, the MTF may submit a request to the Major Command (MAJCOM) for a waiver. Include in the waiver request:

- The task to be performed.
- How the mission justifies the task to be performed by the medical technician.
- The training protocol and competency criteria for personnel performing the task.
- Guidelines for maintaining proficiency.
- That the task identified is within the reasonable scope of the technician's training and abilities.

9.2.1. After the technician has satisfied competency criteria, he or she must maintain proficiency and the technician's supervisor must document it on AF Form 797, **Job Qualification Standard Continuation**.

9.3. Local policy should describe the satisfaction of competency criteria, the approval and documentation process for this utilization of personnel with expanded scopes of practice.

## **10. Forms Prescribed:**

- AF Form 2681, Personnel Data Guide and Skills Assessment Checklist.
- AF Form 2682, Personnel Data Guide and Skills Assessment-Nurse Manager.
- AF Form 2683, Personnel Data Guide and Skills Assessment-Mental Health Nursing.
- AF Form 2684, Personnel Data Guide and Skills Assessment-Operating Room Nursing.
- AF Form 2685, Personnel Data Guide and Skills Assessment-Nurse Anesthetist.
- AF Form 2686, Personnel Data Guide and Skills Assessment-Critical Care Nursing for ICU, CCU, and ER.
- AF Form 2687, Personnel Data Guide and Skills Assessment-Newborn Nursery Nursing.
- AF Form 2688, Personnel Data Guide and Skills Assessment-Obstetrical/Gynecology Nursing.
- AF Form 2689, Personnel Data Guide and Skills Assessment-Pediatric Nursing.

ALEXANDER M. SLOAN, Lt General, USAF, MC  
Surgeon General

## **Attachment 1**

### **GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES, ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

AFPD 46-1, *Nursing Services*

AFI 41-117, *Educational Programs for Medical Service Officers*

AFI 36-2201, *Developing, Managing, and Conducting Military Training Programs*

American Nurses Association , *current published standards*, ANA Publications, Waldorf, Maryland.

*JCAHO Accreditation Manual for Hospitals*, current edition, JCAHO, Chicago, Illinois.

*JCAHO Accreditation Manual for Ambulatory Health Care*, current edition, JCAHO, Chicago, Illinois.

*JCAHO Accreditation Manual for Mental Health, Chemical Dependency and Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities Services*, current edition, JCAHO, Chicago, Illinois.

*The Lippincott Manual of Nursing Practice*, 4th Edition (or later), 1986, J.B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

**AFI**—Air Force Instruction

**AFPD**—Air Force Policy Directive

**AFR**—Air Force Regulation

**AFSC**—Air Force Specialty Code

**CCU**—Critical Care Unit

**DoD**—Department of Defense

**ER**—Emergency Room

**HQ USAF**—Headquarters United States Air Force

**ICU**—Intensive Care Unit

**JCAHO**—Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations

**MAJCOM**—Major Command

**MDOS**—Medical Operations Squadron

**MTF**—Military Treatment Facility

**NE**—Nurse Executive

**OB/GYN**—Obstetrical/Gynecological

**SG**—Surgeon General

**SGN**—Nursing Services

**STS**—Specialty Training Standard